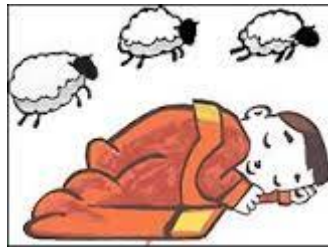


Promoting Healthy Sleep



We know that everyone feels better after a good night's sleep – it's one of the best short breaks available.

The points below give some ideas on how you, as the child's parent or carer, can help get the child/young person to sleep. They will not all be relevant as each child is different and has different needs, but we are sure that some of them will be helpful.

1. The Sleeping Environment

The sleeping environment should have a calming atmosphere.

To encourage sleep, the room should:

- ✓ be quiet
- ✓ be dark (small night lights are fine)
- ✓ not be too hot or too cold
- ✓ be free of disturbances
- ✓ have a comfortable bed
- ✓ not have a computer or television
- ✓ not have a clock with an LED display

The room should be familiar, comfortable and relaxing, it should be used for sleeping and not play, entertainment or punishment (more detailed information and links are shown on the final page).



2. Consistency is key!

- There should be a consistent evening and bedtime routine ending with the child relaxed and ready to sleep.
- The time your child/young person goes to bed/wakes-up should be consistent – this includes at weekends and during holidays (within reason).
- The child/young person should be put to bed when they are tired, but not yet asleep – they should learn to fall asleep on their own, without their parents or carers present.
- Feeding during the day and sleeping at night is advised – try to avoid feeding at night time (with GP/Doctor consent).
- Avoid heavy fluids or a large meal late at night.
- Parents/carers should not reinforce waking issues by compliance to demands – e.g. for drinks, food, ‘one more story’ – to avoid confrontation.
- Naps should be consistent, not too early or late in the day – and should be appropriate for the developmental stage of the child/young person.
- Rough play, or other heightening activities should take place over an hour before bedtime.
- Sugary drinks or ones with high caffeine content (tea, coffee, cola) should be avoided within three hours of bed time, and large amounts of these should also be discouraged throughout the day.



Foods that help sleep

Some foods in **small amounts** will help the brain produce hormones (serotonin and melatonin). These help us to get to sleep faster, help the body relax and give us a more restful night. These foods should be part of a varied diet:

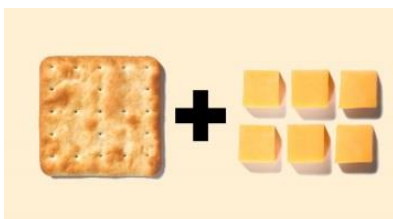
- Oats
- Milk
- Peanuts
- Yoghurt
- Cottage cheese
- Red meat
- Eggs
- Fish
- Poultry
- Chickpeas
- Pumpkin
- Sunflower seeds
- Almonds

However, these should be partnered with some of the following as too much protein can actually keep you awake:

- Brown rice
- Bread
- Whole grains
- Whole wheat
- Crackers

Ideas for combinations of these foods include:

- **Cereal and skimmed milk**
- **Crackers and cheese**
- **Peanut butter and banana**
- **Almonds and dried cherries**



Things to Avoid!

✘ Strenuous exercise or boisterous play before bedtime.

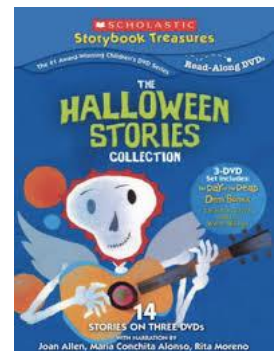


✘ Falling asleep somewhere else other than own bed.

✘ Stimulating or frightening stories, games videos/DVDs.

✘ Excessive fluid intake/large meals.

✘ Elaborate bedtime rituals (kissing all of the teddies in the room/ten stories/calling the whole family).



✘ High caffeine/sugary drinks.

✘ Long naps in the late afternoon.



Room Environment

- Keep the room completely dark. If necessary use blackout curtains or an eye mask – a small night light is fine if the child is scared of the dark.
- Make sure the room isn't too hot or too cold, keep it slightly cool at around 16-18°C (60-65°F).
- Keep clutter out of the bedroom – put their laundry basket/toys/electronics in a different room, or the landing.
- Avoid having a television or computer in the bedroom.
- Turn off anything with an LED display (including clocks).
- Don't treat the child's bedroom as an extension of a play room or somewhere to go for punishment. Use it for sleeping only.
- Ensure the bedroom is calm and minimal – one or two colours only – try not to make lavish designs – photographs of loved ones, or subtle artwork that they like, is fine. It will help them feel more connected to the room and look forward to going to bed.
- Try to avoid bright colours such as reds which are less restful and quite stimulating.

Helpful websites/links

The NHS has provided some helpful information for children and young people's sleep:

[Healthy Sleep Tips for Children](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/)

(<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/>)

[How much sleep do children need?](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-much-sleep-do-kids-need/)

(<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-much-sleep-do-kids-need/>)

[Why Teenagers are Always Tired](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/why-are-teens-always-tired/)

(<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/why-are-teens-always-tired/>)

[Sleep Tips for Teenagers](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/sleep-tips-for-teenagers/)

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